(b) if so, what is the present stage of the project; and

(c) by when the construction of the refinery is likely to be completed?

THE MINISTER OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI B. SHANKARANAND): (a) to (c) The proposal to set up an Oil refinery at Numaligarh in Assam has been cleared by the Public Investment Board (PIB) and is being processed for final approval of the Government. The Implementation schedule has not been finalised.

Drilling of Oil and Gas by Private Sector

285. SHRI VITHALBHAI M. PATEL: Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government have received a number of proposals from the private sector for drilling of oil and gas;

(b) if so, how many proposals have been received by the Government so far;

(c) whether any decision has been taken to allow private sector for drilling of oil gas; and

(d) how much time Government will take a final decision in regard to allowing private sector for drilling oil and gas?

THE MINISTER OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI B. SHANKARANAND): (a) to (d) Government had invited bids from Indian and foreign private companies under the Fourth Round of bidding for explorations for oil and natural gas in 72 blocks—39 offshore and 33 onshore—in India. The last date for receipt of bids was 15-4-1992. A total of 24 bids have been received from 31 companies, either on their own or in consortium, for 13 blocks—5 offshore and 8 onshore. The contracts will be finalised as early as possible.

Supply of Gas to Utteran Power Station

286. SHRI VITHALBHAI M. PATEL: Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the Oil & Natural Gas Commission has committed to supply gas to Utteran power station in Gujarat;

(b) what are the reasons for not fulfilling the commitment to supply gas to the Utteran power project in Gujarat; and

(c) by when gas is likely to be supplied to Utteran power station of Gujarat?

THE MINISTER OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI B. SHANKARANAND): (a) to (c) Production and transportation constraints in South Gujarat have delayed the supply of gas to the Utteran Power Station. Alternative possibilities for making gas available for the power station expeditiously are being looked into.

गैस एजेंसी का आवंटन

287. **श्री राधाकिशन मालवीय :** क्या पेट्रोलियम और प्राकृतिक गैस मंत्री यह बताने की कृपा करेंगे कि :

(क) देश में प्राकृतिक गैस की कुल कितनी आवश्यकता है;

(ख) क्या यह सच है कि बीस हजार से अधिक जनसंख्या वाले स्थानों पर गैस एजेंसी आवंटित की जाती है,

(ग) यदि हां, तो बीस हजार से अधिक जनसंख्या वाले नगर के बाहर गैस कनेक्शन देने का कार्य क्षेत्र कितने किलोमीटर तक होता है,

(घ) क्या ग्रामीण क्षेत्रों में गैस कनेक्शन देने का कोई प्रावधान है; और

(ङ) यदि हां, तो उसका ब्यौरा क्या है?

पेट्रोलियम और प्राकृतिक गैस मंत्री (श्री बी० शंकरानन्द) : (क) पहले ही किए गए करीब